

# Independence is a journey...

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organizers to move the day's events from Phillips Park to the Windjammer Club. But that did little to spoil the festive mood as the ballroom shined in the colors of the Jamaican flag, black, gold and green.

The symbolisms of the three colors are yellow for the sunshine and natural resources; black, for the burdens borne by the people and green for the agriculture and hope for the future.

"As we celebrate here today let us not forget that we have also suffered reversals and missed many opportunities," added Collin Kesley, 2006 Jamaican Independence Day Committee (JIDC), Vice President. "We can always do better than we have done. We have the capacity to do it and we have the duty to do it both in honor of those who struggled for our independence and in protection of the legacy that belongs to those who are yet to come."

Representatives from the 2006 JIDC and MWR personnel worked extremely fast in setting up the Windjammer Club to support over 600 revelers throughout the day.

Due to mechanical failure with an aircraft, U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, Brenda LaGrange-Johnson and Senator Floyd Morris, could not attend. They however sent an Independence Day message to the Jamaican community through CAPT Mark Leary, NAVSTA Commanding Officer. In their message, they wished the Jamaican community a very happy Independence Day and they hope to visit GTMO in the near future.



Photo by MC1(SW) Terry Matlock

***After nearly 40 years of individual service to the GTMO Fire Department, Jamaican firemen, Neville Stewart and George Rookwood, were promoted to their current rank as Battalion Fire Chiefs, during a ceremony held at Fire Station No. 1, on July 8.***

The celebration started off with a soulful rendition of the U.S. National Anthem, sung by Sentara Glover, along with the Jamaican Anthem, sung by Kimone Keane.

Gerald Keane, the JIDC President spoke of his thankfulness for such a wonderful turnout. "Looking at this gathering, I cannot help but feel overwhelmed, said Keane. "This gathering here is indicative of the essence of what love and respect is all. Yes, this truly echoes our motto "Out of many one people."

Authentic Jamaican dishes such as curried goat, jerk chicken, yams, ackee, saltfish and more were served for lunch after local officials and keynote speakers awarded many Jamaican residents for their devotion and service to GTMO. Not just for their support with military operations, but with also the community and as a whole.

GTMO's Fire Department Battalion Chiefs, Neville Stewart and George Rookwood received the loudest ovation after they were introduced as serving the GTMO community for more than 40 years of service. Both men were the first foreign nationals to be promoted to the ranks of Battalion Fire Chief.

"I would like to thank MWR, especially the GTMO community for always supporting the Jamaican community. Frankly speaking, this celebration is an example of the type of relationship we have here in GTMO," said Stewart. "I miss home, my family and my friends sometimes, but I've come to make friends down here who have become my family as well."

For almost a year, JIDC worked long and hard in preparations for the celebration. However, the smiling faces on those who attended the celebrations are sure in-

dications that those efforts were worth it.

"To get to this day we had to carry out a series of fund-raisers, thank you GTMO community for your support. Every time we call upon you, you were always there to assist us to make contributions," said Collin Kesley, "During the fund-raisers, we needed help to make this celebration the kind we envisioned, said Collin Kesley. "We appreciate and thank you all for your assistance, guidance and contributions. The unique band, dancers, performers and everyone who traveled from Jamaica to celebrate with us, as we say in Jamaica "Big Up!"

This was a celebration of independence, but also a celebration of a community united.

"I would like to say to the younger generation, whether you are Jamaican or not, take advantage of every opportunity that you have in life. There are several people out there who would wish to have the type of opportunities that we have here in GTMO. I know it's not easy sometimes, but if you work hard and stay humble, you'll always achieve what you want on life," said Neville Stewart, Battalion Fire Chief, GTMO Fire Department. "There are schools on this base. Take advantage of them and aim for things higher than what you have now," replied Stewart.

Aug. 5, was a day that some Jamaicans will cherish, but to everyone in GTMO, it was "Out of many, one people."